



The Super MODEL

Fall, 2009-2010
Issue 16

SBCUSD Youth Services
Department

So You Want to Reduce Misbehaviors?

Inside this Issue:

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>Applying the Research</i> | 2 |
| <i>Speaking in Behaviorally Specific Terms</i> | 3 |
| <i>Discipline Vital Statistics</i> | 4 |
| District PBS Contact Information | 4 |

If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn.

— Ignacio Estrada



What The Research Is Saying

According to the research, punishment and exclusion are the most common responses to student misbehaviors in schools (Lake & Murakami, 1987; Rose, 1998; Nieto, 1999; Sprick, Borgmeier & Nolet, 2002). Unfortunately, the use of punishment and exclusion, without a proactive support system in place to address misbehaviors, has been associated with increases in: a) aggression, b) vandalism, c) truancy, and d) drop out rates (Mayer, 1995; Mayer & Sulzar-Azaroff, 1991; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). In fact, some forms of punishment may reward and maintain problem behavior (Gresham, 1991; March & Horner, 2002).

By choosing to punish a student for a misbehavior, staff are assuming the student clearly understood the behavioral expectation and is able to demonstrate the appropriate behavior in a variety of settings under a variety of conditions but, due to lack of motivation or choice, intentionally misbehaved anyway. While educators routinely teach and correct students for academic errors (incorrectly reading a word, forgetting to borrow when subtracting), they often respond emotionally and punitively to behavioral errors. Unfortunately, reactive strategies which rely primarily on punishment fail to teach expected behaviors (Horner & Sugai, 1999) and may, in fact, impair the adult-student relationship.

LEAST Effective Responses

Surprisingly, the research has found that even interventions deemed as "positive"

are also ineffective. Reviews of over 600 studies on how to reduce school discipline problems have found the **LEAST** effective responses are:

- **Counseling (talk therapies)**
- **Psycho-therapy**
- **Punishment**

(Gottfredson, 1997; Elliot, Hamburg, & Williams, 1998; Tolan & Guerra, 1994; Lipsey, 1991, 1992).

It appears that removing students from the learning environment — either to punish or to counsel — are not effective strategies to address misbehavior. So what does all this mean? Does the research provide suggestions as to what types of interventions are effective?

MOST Effective Responses

The same review cited above indicates the **MOST** effective responses to school discipline problems are:

- **Academic restructuring**
- **Social skills training**
- **Behavioral interventions**

The research is telling us that students who are able to access the curriculum, are explicitly taught to act appropriately, and are behaviorally supported within the educational setting have the greatest chance of experiencing success.

Rather than removing students from the environments in which misbehaviors occur, it turns out the environments themselves may need to be restructured to proactively address environmental dynamics as well as provide behavioral instruction. ■

Applying the Research

According to the Response to Intervention (RtI) service delivery model, schools should expect approximately 7-15% of their student population to require additional behavioral supports in order to be successful. If the research is telling us our traditional “interventions” of punishment and counseling are not effective, then what types of interventions should we be implementing for those students who require “something more?” How can schools obtain more information regarding the interventions cited by research as effective?

1) Academic Restructuring

It is the expectation of San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD) that all schools become Professional Learning Communities (PLC) committed to implementing Response to Intervention (RtI) processes. The district has defined RtI as, “a school-wide, systematic, collaborative process in which all school resources are seamlessly integrated and singularly focused on the same outcome — to ensure that every student learns at high levels.” Implementation of RtI includes the establishment of both academic and behavior multi-tiered support structures.

For more information regarding SBCUSD’s RtI initiative or to obtain a copy of the 2009-2010 training schedule, contact the Professional Development Center (PDC).

2) Behavior Instruction/Social Skills Training

School-wide **behavioral instruction** refers to the process of teaching all students the cultural expectation to *Be Safe, Be Responsible, Be Respectful*. School-wide behavior instruction also refers to the teaching and practicing of how those expectations apply to all locations on campus — classrooms, quad/playground, hallways, cafeteria, etc. This form of behavior instruction is generally provided within the classroom setting by the regular education teacher but may also be taught in different locations across campus by the adults who oversee those areas.



Behavior Instruction: Role-plays and PowerPoints are available to support schools in the teaching of school-wide expectations.

In addition to behavioral instruction, developmentally appropriate **social skills training** should also be occurring on three levels: whole school (by teachers in the classroom), small groups (by teachers and/or support staff during advisory, or an elective period) and one-on-one (by identified staff, as appropriate). SBCUSD has selected several different social skills curricula which may be utilized depending on the needs of the student.

- **K-2:** *I Can Problem Solve*
- **3-6:** *Skillstreaming in the Elementary School*
- **1, 3, 5, 8 & 10:** *Too Good for Drugs & Violence*
- **6-8:** *Skillstreaming the Adolescent*
- **MS Opportunity:** *Tools for Teaching Social Skills in School*
- **6-12:** *Seven Habits of Successful Teens*

To obtain more information regarding curricula and supports, contact the district PBS coaches.



Social Skills Training: Reformatted lessons and PowerPoints are available to assist schools in providing social skills training.

3) Behavior Interventions

Once social and/or behavioral skill deficits have been ruled out, schools will need to determine why misbehaviors are still occurring. In order to accomplish this, problem-solving teams will need to identify the dynamics contributing to the misbehavior which may include one or both of the following:

- **Environmental factors**
inconsistent expectations/procedures/routines, mismatch between instructional strategies and student learning...
- **Functional factors**
seeking peer and/or adult attention, avoiding work which is too difficult, avoiding interactions with peers/adults...

Whether the interventions are designed to support students or staff, school teams will need to actively progress monitor those interventions in order to determine their effectiveness. For more information regarding behavior interventions, contact the PBS coaches. ■

Speaking in Behaviorally Specific Terms

The Comfort Zone

Most educators are comfortable speaking in behaviorally specific terms when correcting, teaching, and practicing academic skills. It would be common, for example, to hear a teacher talk to a student in the following manner:

It looks like you are having trouble with this math problem, Johnny. Let me see if I can help figure out where you had difficulty. It looks like you started the problem correctly. You began by subtracting the 5 from the 8, but then when you tried to subtract the 7 from the 3, you forgot to regroup. Remember how we learned to borrow 10 from this number? Yeah, that's correct. Now let's try one more problem to make sure it makes sense.

In contrast, many educators do not feel comfortable using behaviorally specific language when teaching and correcting social skills.

Observing Behaviors

The purpose of collecting behavior data is to *empower students with the knowledge and skills they need to overcome their behavioral errors*. The first step in this process is to accurately observe the behavior from an emotional distance. It may be helpful for staff to think of themselves as behavior detectives who are gathering critical data in order to solve a problem.

Staff should be able to provide a detailed account of the following:

- *location and time of the misbehavior*
- *student's actions/movements*
- *words directed toward adults and other students*
- *volume, rate, and rhythm of the participants' speech*
- *facial expressions used*
- *intensity and duration of the behavior*

Describing Behaviors

Behavioral descriptions should be detailed enough that even a person who was not present would be able to visualize the incident. When describing the misbehavior, avoid making judgments about the students' motives and intentions. Instead, ensure behavioral descriptions include the following:

- **Specificity:**
Speak in behaviorally specific terms to help students understand what we liked/disliked about their behavior.
- **Actions:**
Help students make the connection between the words we use to describe their behaviors and the behavior displayed. Focus on the observable action rather than an ambiguous label.
- **Objectivity:**
Use a calm, matter-of-fact tone to describe the behavior. Judgmental terms not only harm the teacher/student relationship, but may also trigger an emotional response from students.

Making the Vague Clear

Below are examples of how to turn commonly used vague terms into behaviorally specific descriptors.

- **Defiance:**
 - ✓ did not look up or respond verbally when spoken to by staff
 - ✓ shouted, "No way!" when asked to wait their turn
 - ✓ did not report to assigned location on time
- **Disrespect:**
 - ✓ repeated adult directive in a mocking tone
 - ✓ rolled their eyes in response to a directive
 - ✓ did not state their name when asked
- **Obnoxious:**
 - ✓ blurted out a comment without waiting to be called on

- ✓ initiated side conversations with peers during independent work time
- ✓ talked in an excessively loud voice during group work time

Bad Attitude:

- ✓ crumpled their paper and threw it across the room when directed to turn in their assignment
- ✓ rummaged through their desk rather than start the assigned independent practice
- ✓ yelled, "She stinks!," when directed to work with the classroom aid

Noncompliant:

- ✓ ignored a request by staff to open their math text book
- ✓ sat down on the floor and folded their arms across their chest when directed by staff to go to the office

In order to ensure students clearly understand our expectations, it is essential we explicitly teach and correct behavioral errors using concrete and objective terms. The goal is to empower students so they can meet the expectations — **NOT** shame them into blind obedience or reinforce feelings of failure and/or hopelessness.

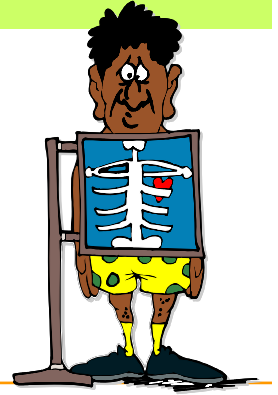
Whether staff are **acknowledging appropriate behaviors, correcting rule violations, and/or problem-solving** with staff/parents, it is critical to accurately and objectively describe the behavior in question. Speaking in behaviorally specific terms assists educators in gaining the cooperation they need as well as the behavior change they desire. ■

For more information refer to:
M. Hensley, W. Powell, S. Lamke, S. Hartman (2007). *The Well-Managed Classroom*. Boys Town Press.

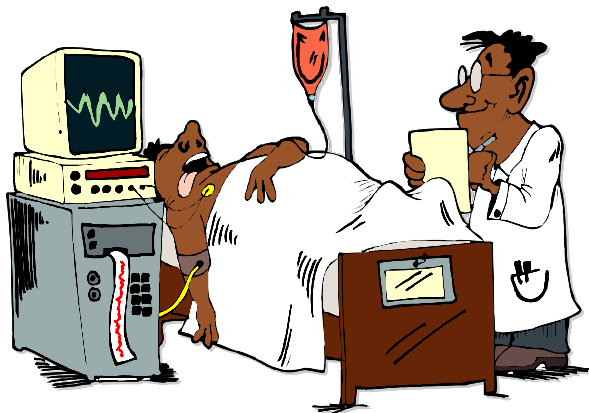


Discipline Vital Statistics

Just as a doctor systematically records and reviews a patient's vital signs in order to assess the health of the patient, school administrators must review discipline data in order to assess the health of the school. The following list includes the types of data schools should regularly review as a PBS team and staff.



- **Demographics**
 - Total number of students enrolled
 - Ethnic percentages
 - Percentage of student on free/reduced lunch
 - Percentage of English Learners
- **Academic Performance Index (API)**
- **Average Daily Attendance (ADA)**
- **Number of Substitute Teachers**
 - Per month
 - By reason
- **Office Referrals:**
 - Total Count Comparisons
 - ◆ Year to year
 - ◆ Month to month
 - ◆ Team to team
 - ◆ Track to track
 - By Location
 - By Time of Day
- By Student
- By Problem Behavior
- By Environmental Factors
- By Functional Factors
- By Administrative Intervention
- **Suspensions:**
 - Total Count Comparisons
 - ◆ Year to year
 - ◆ Month to month
 - ◆ Team to team
 - ◆ Track to track
 - By Violation
 - By Student
 - By Staff
 - By Administrator
 - By Time of Day
- **Expulsions**
 - Total Count Comparisons
 - By Violation
 - By Student
 - By Staff
- **School Police Contacts**
 - Total Number of Responses
 - ◆ Year to year
 - ◆ Month to month
 - Type of Request
 - ◆ Proactive
 - ◆ Reactive
 - Outcome
 - ◆ Conference
 - ◆ Ticket
 - ◆ Removal



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